National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Beyond mitigation: Planning for climate change adaptation

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Abstract:

Consider the floods, plagues, famines, and other calamities we can expect from climate change, and an apocalyptic prophecy might come to mind, perhaps rightfully so. An expert panel convened to assess risks from climate change put it this way in the 16 May 2009 issue of The Lancet: Should global mean temperatures rise an additional 5–6°C, “more than a billion people could be dispersed in environmental mass migration. . . . An additional 2 billion would be water stressed while billions more would face hunger or starvation. The risk of armed conflict would rise. Public health systems around the world would be damaged, some to the point of collapse.”Alarming scenarios like this have fueled efforts to lower heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions and limit future impacts [see “Climate Change Abatement Strategies: Which Way Is the Wind Blowing?” p. A296 this issue]. But more recently, scientists have acknowledged that some degree of global warming is now inevitable. “Climate change models tell us that even if we blocked all emissions now, the amounts of greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere would raise global temperatures by an additional 2°C by 2100,” says Robert Corell, vice president of the John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics, and Environment, in Washington, DC. In light of this probability, Corell says, mitigation has begun sharing the global policy stage with a new challenge: how to adapt to climate change that is already under way.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Air Pollution, Extreme Weather Event, Food/Water Security, Precipitation, Sea Level Rise, Temperature, Unspecified Exposure

Air Pollution: Allergens, Interaction with Temperature, Ozone

Extreme Weather Event: Drought, Flooding, Wildfires

Food/Water Security: Agricultural Productivity

Temperature: Extreme Heat, Fluctuations

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

United States

Health Co-Benefit/Co–Harm (Adaption/Mitigation):

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to reduce or cope with greenhouse gases

A focus of content

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Diabetes/Obesity, Infectious Disease, Morbidity/Mortality

Infectious Disease: Vectorborne Disease

Vectorborne Disease: General Vectorborne, Mosquito-borne Disease

Mosquito-borne Disease: Dengue, Malaria

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation, Mitigation

Model/Methodology:

type of model used or methodology development is a focus of resource

Methodology

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified